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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 000728

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/28/2014
TAGS: PTER PREL IZ YM COUNTER TERRORISM MARITIME SECURITY
SUBJECT: PRESENTATION OF INCOMING LEGATT TO MINISTER OF INTERIOR

Classified By: CTC AUSTIN G. GILREATH, for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) Summary: On 27 March 2004, The Ambassador met with ROYG Minister of the Interior Rashad al-Alimi to present newly arrived LEGATT and discuss security subjects. Alimi warmly welcomed LEGATT, and listed a number of issues on which MOI sought cooperation with LEGATT. Also present at the meeting were MOI Office Director Sunidar, DCM, ARSO and Embassy Counterterrorism Coordinator. End summary.

LEGATT WELL-RECEIVED

¶2. (C) Minister Alimi welcomed LEGATT warmly and stated that a new chapter of cooperation was beginning in ROYG-USG relations. Alimi identified MOI Office Director General Sunidar as the LEGATT's primary point of contact for future interaction. As a first instance of cooperation, Alimi requested LEGATT/FBI assistance in investigating the case of a Yemeni arrested in December 2003 who confessed to stabbing three foreigners (none U.S. citizens) in Sana'a. The man claimed extreme religious views and was found to be in possession of \$60,000 USD, but the MOI was unclear as to his true motives or connection to outside financial support and requested assistance to include a possible polygraph examination. Alimi further requested LEGATT assistance in the formation of MOI's nascent counter-terrorism unit and CT Operations Center.

OTHER SECURITY ISSUES

¶3. (U) The Ambassador informed Alimi that the American-supplied Yemeni Coast Guard (YCG) boats would be officially commissioned in a ceremony in Aden on 7 April 2004. The YCG would assume total responsibility for maintaining maritime security on the two refineries and free port zone in Aden. The Ambassador and Alimi both agreed that the YCG would serve well to increase interest and international support in Yemeni maritime security issues.

¶4. (C) The Ambassador thanked Alimi for the additional security provided by the MOI to the Embassy in March during the ROYG's highly successful CT/security operations in Abyan and during the aftermath of the Shaykh Yassin assassination.

¶5. (C) The Ambassador briefed Alimi on the proposed INL-sponsored anti-riot training module that would be provided to police forces in Sana'a. Alimi was very receptive to the proposed training and acknowledged that it was sorely needed given past performance. (Comment: Alimi was likely referring to anti-U.S. demonstrations that occurred approximately 1/4 mile from the Embassy on March 2, 2003, during Operation Iraqi Freedom, resulting in the death of several protesters and injuries to police. End comment)

¶6. (U) CT Coordinator briefed Alimi on an upcoming Export and Border Security (EXBS) Conference to be held in Malta on 11-14 May, and invited the ROYG to identify 4-6 individuals for sponsored participation. Alimi responded favorably.

¶7. (C) The Ambassador briefed Alimi that the Embassy would be holding a regional chiefs of mission conference in Sana'a in late April. Alimi commented that such a conference was a positive step and would be well-received. He offered assurance of security escorts and assistance as needed.

IRAN EXPLOITING YASSIN ASSASSINATION

¶8. (C) Alimi told the Ambassador that recent extremist

activity and anti-U.S. vitriol at the grand mosques in Sa'dah and Sana'a was due to Government of Iran (GOI) involvement. Alimi said the GOI was providing instructors and financial assistance to elements who sought to exploit and expound anti-Western sentiment, particularly in the aftermath of the Yassin assassination.

ABU SHAHEED FOLLOW-UP

19. (C) Alimi confirmed that the Political Security Organization (PSO) had recently arrested Abu al-Shaheed and had begun questioning him on his involvement in terrorist activities in Yemen. Alimi commented that Shaheed had openly wept during interrogation and expressed his desire at reconciliation. Alimi said he himself had interviewed Shaheed, but that Shaheed remained in PSO custody. Because Shaheed had given himself up after negotiations with ROYG Security Forces, and was cooperating with interrogators, Alimi said he believed that this may indicate a positive future trend in which those suspected of terrorist activities would turn themselves in rather than be subjected to ROYG manhunts.

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